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Nation

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The law of the land

by Will Nicholls

Last month's unanimous Supreme Court decision in favour of BC's Tsilhqot'in people is the first time the court has ever issued a direct declaration of Aboriginal title to a First Nation in this country. This has far-reaching implications for mining, forestry, pipeline projects, resource extraction and how the Canadian government will have to deal with First Nations.

AFN spokesperson and Regional Chief for Quebec/Labrador Ghislain Picard called it "a landmark decision that compels us all to embark on a new course. The court has clearly sent a message that the Crown must take Aboriginal title seriously and reconcile with First Nations honourably. This decision will no doubt go down in history as one of the most important and far reaching ever rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada."

The William v. Canada case took over two decades to resolve but its effects will be felt for much longer. Experts and lawyers are arguing about what it really means for other First Nations across Canada. While most agree that TransCanada Corporation's plans for the Energy East pipeline from Alberta to New Brunswick is in jeopardy, others question whether or not it would apply to Ontario's Ring of Fire mining development.

Bill Gallagher, a lawyer who specializes in resource disputes on First Nations territory, said the decision wouldn't apply in Ontario as the issue of Aboriginal title to the land was settled when the numbered treaties were signed. He added however that First Nations across Canada have won an amazing a number of court cases on this issue.

Gallagher has written a book, *Resource Rulers: Fortune and Folly on Canada's Road to Resources*, detailing how First Nations have won case after case on natural resource projects. Gallagher said this has given First Nations an important voice in the economic future of Canada.

Ontario chiefs say the Tsilhqot'in decision sends an important message to governments and resource corporations about dealing in good faith. Ontario's Northern Development and Mines Minister Michael Gravelle said the province would review the ruling.

Ontario will not be the only province or territory looking at the ruling, as there are large tracts of unceded territory throughout Canada. The federal government will be joining them as the city of Ottawa is on the same type of territory as the Tsilhqot'in and no treaty has ever been signed by the Algonquin of Ontario. It should be interesting how the balance between government and the rights of Aboriginal peoples will play out.

Interestingly enough, the day before the Supreme Court decision was handed down, the Vancouver city council formally acknowledged that the city's land base actually belongs to three local First Nations.

Mayor Gregor Robertson said landowners shouldn't worry as the declaration, while an important gesture, was largely symbolic. He added, "We are formally acknowledging that we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. There was never any treaty with these nations … At this point, the city is acknowledging that fact."

The recent decision may have them regretting that move. Vancouver's property values are worth around $374.1 billion. A First Nations property tax of just 0.5 per cent would see over a billion dollars a year for the three Nations. An interesting idea and a great balance.

Contents

editorial
The law of the land 3

rez notes
Melting the pounds 4

news
Crees run in Hawaii 5
Mistissini Post problems 7

features
Aboriginal Day celebrations 10
Coon Come's whirlwind travels 13
Cree youth in Costa Rica 23
Romeo Saganash investigates Ottawa 29
New Mistissini youth centre 33
Ryan McMahon hosts Ottawa powwow 34

UTNS
Explosions in the sky 38

Dancer at National Aboriginal Day in Chibougamau

photo by:
Nicholas Paillard, Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Center

Melting the pounds

by Joshua Iserhoff

Nemaska reached 35 degrees C during the recent heat wave and it was simply divine. Flew to Waskaganish for a meeting and had an amazing time with Fran, Clark, Sheila and Red (thank you for the tea and bannock). My room was freezing from my singing AC. I stepped out but my linen attire for the day was no good for the Skag. Thanks to Virginia Wabano's warm vehicle and smile I was able enjoy my stay.

This is what I love about the north: it is incredibly unpredictable. One day it's hot and the next day is brrrr. My good friend Barry Bearskin can't handle heat and I am pretty sure there are many Crees in the same situation. After all, 10 months of cold is what we're all accustomed to.

I must say this: enjoy the heat, butter that heat rash and drink tons of water. Life's too short, and summers too short to complain. Get Gold Bond, it cools.

I recently enjoyed a weekend with friends at Niagara Falls, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. I couldn't believe the number of people from around the world blocking my view, a sea of people clicking away with their smart phones.

Of course, I did a major #selfie session. I think Noreen and Sam can attest to that. I didn't get to go to Marineland because not everyone loves Marineland. There was a tiny protest written up in the newspaper that morning so I just didn't want any bad press. I think I would much rather want to see a killer whale breaching in Hawaii again.

Speaking of Hawaii, Kauai to be exact, I am heading there this August to run a marathon for the Canadian Diabetes Association. You may not know but our youth now are getting diagnosed with some form of diabetes at a very young age. The health professionals predict that in 20 years, 70% of our people will be affected by diabetes!

We can change this prediction by being more health conscious. I am doing my part in getting this message across and using any platform to create awareness. I will be fundraising this summer and I am happy that my favourite red-headed doll, Amy German, is doing a story on the efforts that Demerise and I are devoting to this issue.

It's so important to teach our young ones about healthy living. I don't have any kids but I consider my close friends as my own and I am as ferociously honest with them as they are with me. As the saying goes "friends don't let friends get fat." That's now my line.

I've shed 25 pounds, all of them from healthy eating, living – and a few strict talks and rude stares from my best friends. Amy's story (in this issue) has all the deets you need if you want to donate funds to this important cause.

I am training and I hope these hot-and-cold temperature zigzags throughout the season so we can all enjoy our summer. In the meantime, while you are planking – give some thought on a specific concern that you can bring up at the Cree Nation Government Annual General Assembly. Keep moving mes chères ami(es) and let's fight diabetes together.

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"My hope and my wish is that every Cree takes this seriously because we now have 20-year-olds who are severely affected. This is no longer an Elder's disease as it once was."

Joshua Iserhoff

Running for life

Two Crees to run in Hawaii for diabetes research

by Amy German

Frustrated by the ever-increasing number of cases of diabetes and diabetes-related diseases in Eeyou Istchee, Joshua Iserhoff and Demerise Mayappy will be taking part in a special Canadian Diabetes Association fundraiser in Hawaii in August.

The two Crees will be representing Eeyou Istchee on the island of Kauai August 31. They each hope to raise up to $6100 to fund their participation in the event to help support diabetes research.

"This was really important for me to do because more and more of our youth are being diagnosed with diabetes every day," said Iserhoff, the Youth Grand Chief. "Just the other day I was told about an 11-year-old getting diagnosed. A few weeks ago, one of my co-workers was diagnosed and then another good friend was diagnosed with a kidney disease. I have another friend who just had an operation and is now on dialysis; she is 20 years old and now has to live in the city for treatment. The list just keeps on growing."

Mayappo, an employment officer at the Cree Nation Government, is participating because she and her family have been deeply affected by diabetes. Two years ago she was diagnosed as a pre-diabetic, which scared her as she had already witnessed her parents struggle with the disease.

"I lost my dad seven years ago to a blood infection. He had type-1 diabetes and had to take insulin daily. It's very hard to cure diseases once you are already diabetic. It's hard losing a loved one to diabetes. But this served as an eye-opener for me to take a better care of myself – to stay active and to watch what I eat," said Mayappo. "I have lost many people to diabetes – my dad, uncles and friends. I'm doing my marathon for them and also for the people who are diabetic. I hope one of these days a cure will be found."

As for Iserhoff, participating in this event has been part of an overall lifestyle change he started as a New Year's resolution, committing to an ethic to walk his own talk and be an example as the YGC. This was prompted by a life-changing moment involving a friend.

"Last year when my friend Shirley (Matoush) was diagnosed (with a kidney disease called IgA nephropathy), I started to think about my eating habits. When she tearfully told me her story, it hit me hard. We had this moment when I realized that it wasn't just her but this is happening everywhere and in every community. That night as I lay on my bed, I decided that I would walk the talk. I always told people not to eat junk food, but then I would eat it myself all of the time," said Iserhoff.

Iserhoff has since lost about 25 pounds. Participating in this run is part of his walking-the-talk ethos. Like many, Iserhoff said he felt helpless and "crazy-mad" watching so many around him suffer from diabetes and this is one step to fight back.

Joshua Iserhoff

"This money that I am raising is going to go to diabetes research, prevention and education. My hope and my wish is that every Cree takes this seriously because we now have 20-year-olds who are severely affected. This is no longer an Elder's disease as it once was," said Iserhoff.

To sponsor Iserhoff and Mayappo, go to: http://goo.gl/rfUPr0

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Photo: Handout , Canada Post

Post office problems

Inadequate mail service has Mistissini residents going postal

by Jeremy East

Like many northern communities, the Cree Nation of Mistissini relies solely on Canada Post to provide its residents with the means to send and receive letters and packages. Private delivery companies don't serve the community. The community's burgeoning population means its postal needs are growing, but people in town claim that Canada Post isn't meeting their needs.

Despite being one the two largest communities in Eeyou Istchee, Mistissini's post office hours are among the most restrictive. The office is staffed for six hours daily, from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm on weekdays. By comparison, postal outlets in Chisasibi, Wemindji, Whapmagoostui, Waskaganish and Waswanipi are open for full eight-hour days.

For some residents of Mistissini, the frustration goes beyond the office's inconvenient hours of business.

"Beyond the limited hours, there is a lot of inconsistency in the service," said Scott Forward, a technician for the James Bay Cree Communications Society. "People complain that mail often isn't sorted the day that it arrives, and the post office is often closed when it is scheduled to be open."

Prompted by fellow community members' complaints on Facebook and his own dissatisfaction, Forward started an online petition demanding that Canada Post extend the hours of the Mistissini Post Office to reflect the business hours of the community. The petition also aims to create a minimum of one full-time position and ideally two full-time positions at the office.

"We live in a remote part of the world, I can't just go over to Future Shop to get parts, and I know other people find themselves in similar situations," said Forward. "Considering coastal communities have better hours and more personnel to accomplish the task, it makes me believe that we can do a better job in Mistissini."

Forward's online petition had garnered 274 signatures as of July 2. Some of the signees posted the reasoning behind their support, mirroring many of Forward's points.

"I do a lot of shopping online and it's nice to have operating hours that are more flexible," wrote Nellie Wapachee. Tammy Reeves expressed the need to receive and send work-related documents. Christine Rabbitskin posted that a well-run post office is important to those who don't have cars to drive to Chibougamau.

After Forward organized a meeting with Deputy Chief John S. Matoush, he agreed that the postal service, as it exists, has serious shortfalls that need to be addressed. They include the need to improve the way personnel are structured as well as the business hours of the office. The number of boxes available was also mentioned as an area that needs improvement.

A meeting between the band council and Canada Post may be forthcoming after this month's elections. According to Forward, the possibility of the band, one of its subsidiaries or an entrepreneur taking control of the Mistissini Post Office was explored at the meeting.

According to Canada Post, efforts have been made to increase the office's staff.

"We've recently had a job posting in Mistissini and surrounding communities and we're continuing to do everything we can to staff up," Canada Post Media Relations Manager Eugene Knapik told the Nation. "We appreciate the request to extend hours in the community; however, at this time with the difficulty we've experienced staffing the office, there have been some times when we have not been able to open during all the currently posted hours."

Like many of the people in his community, Forward is not convinced that enough is being done.

"I find it very hard to believe that the resources being committed are representative of a community of 4,500 people, not to mention a population growth rate that is much higher than the country average," said Forward.

To read the petition, visit www.nationnews.ca/mistissini-post-office and follow the link at the bottom of the page.

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Odjick faces his final fight

Aboriginal hockey star and feared NHL enforcer Gino Odjick revealed late June that a terminal illness might mean he only has weeks to live. Odjick disclosed his condition in an open letter to his fans posted on the official website of the Vancouver Canucks.

"We have shared many great moments together over the years but today I need to share the most difficult news of my life," wrote Odjick. "About two months ago I was diagnosed with a rare terminal disease called AL amyloidosis. It's hardening my heart and my doctors aren't sure how long I have to live. Initially they thought years, but now they think it could be a lot less. I could be down to months or even weeks."

Odjick, 43, is an Algonquin from Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation in Quebec. He played 605 NHL games with the Canucks, New York Islanders, Philadelphia and Montreal. He retired as a Hab in 2002. Throughout his professional career, Odjick was a hero to countless young Aboriginal hockey players.

"It also means the world to me that my hockey career gave me a chance to open doors for kids in Aboriginal community," he wrote. "I was just a little old Indian boy from the rez. If I could do it, so could they. My hope is that my hockey story helps show kids from home what's possible."

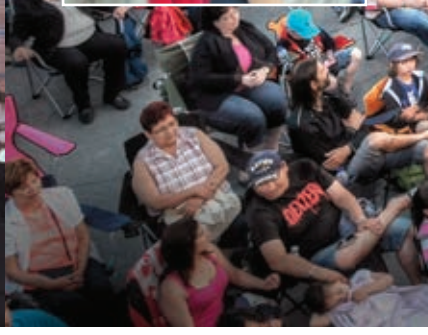
Odjick's letter set off a wave of appreciation from his thousands of fans, including those in the Assembly of First Nations.

"He always made time to speak to our youth, to listen to them and to visit with them personally. Much of this work he did quietly because it was not for publicity – it was because he believes in our youth," wrote AFN spokesperson Ghislain Picard in a release. "While we are tremendously sorry to hear of this news, anyone who knows Gino knows that on and off the ice he is brave, he has heart and he is a fighter. Our thoughts are with you, Gino!"

At play on Aboriginal Day

Chibougamau and Val-d'Or share their celebrations

Story by Amy German Photos by the Val-d'Or Native Friendship Centre, Nicolas Paillard of the Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Center and Roy Legate



National Aboriginal Day has become the time of the year in many communities to share Native pride, culture and traditions with the rest of the world and this was carried out in style for the northern communities of Chibougamau and Val-d'Or but in very different ways.

Not wanting to compete with the Beauce Carnival that was in town June 21, the Chibougamau Eenou Friendship Centre actually held their festivities June 7. About 300 people attended the event under sunny warm skies on Gilman Beach by the centre.

According to Jo-Ann Toulouse, the centre's executive director, the event had a mini-powwow vibe.

"We tried out a few new things and it worked out really well. The day started out like it always has, with a walking out ceremony. It was a little more structured this time around however; we had a lot of shows and demonstrations," said Toulouse

The event began with a walking-out ceremony for Reilly Shecapio Blacksmith as Waseskun Drums from Waswanipi played an honour song.

Throughout the day various musicians performed, including John Boudrias and his band, Glenn Polson, and John and Johnny Bosum.

Moving to this music was Gabriel Whiteduck. He had come with a group of dancers that included Paula Menarick, who put on dancing demonstrations while Whiteduck talked to people about the dances and their origins. There was also a traditional hoop dancer, Marie-Celine Einish.

"The site was very open so that we had the dancers in the middle and they would come and pull people out

of the crowd to dance with them. This was a lot of fun, people were very willing and that always adds to the energy of the day," said Toulouse.

Over in Val-d'Or, the local friendship centre put on one of the biggest parties of the year for the solstice, featuring all sorts of amazing performances on a big stage in the lot beside the centre.

"It was an all-out success in terms of the quality of the show and calibre of the artists performing. We had Florent Vollant and friends, incredible weather and over 2000 people came to celebrate!" exclaimed Edith Cloutier, the centre's executive director.

Cloutier said there were as many Natives as non-Natives taking in the shows with a real harmony that could be felt between everyone on stage and at the show.

> "Our objective with this is to celebrate our pride as First People but also to share the richness of our culture and our diversity of our people and our languages with everyone."
>
> Edith Cloutier

"Our objective with this is to celebrate our pride as First People but also to share the richness of our culture and our diversity of our people and our languages with everyone," said Cloutier.

The day began with a traditional celebration that featured drumming and dancing and an opening prayer. They included the drumming group, the Screaming Eagles from Lac Simon, and three types of traditional dancers ¬– traditional dancing with Jerry Hunter, hoop dancing with Gilbert Niquwe and a fancy dancing demonstration by Akim Ratt.

"People were very impressed with the regalia but we did this not to make a show of it, when we dance we celebrate our pride and we shared this," said Cloutier.

The second part to the event was a concert headlined by Florent Vollant that included many Native and non-Native performers. Biz from Loco Locas (hip hop) was part of line-up as was Bourbon Gauthier (country) and Innu performer Shauit (reggae).

"Having this kind of diversity and combining modern and traditional music, really broadened the opportunity for all sorts of people to come out. There were children and families, Elders, Natives, non-Natives and so it was a really interesting mix of people," said Cloutier.

On the move

Grand Chief Coon Come discusses his whirlwind travels in June

By Amy German

From a summit of Quebec chiefs in Quebec City to seeing President Obama in North Dakota to a meeting with BC leaders and finally to speaking to lawyers in Iqaluit, all in the space of a week-and-a-half, Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come has been discussing the journey the people of Eeyou Istchee have experienced over the past 40 years.

After seeing so many interesting photos appear on Coon Come's Facebook account, the Nation was curious about the story behind these images.

The Nation: Over the last few weeks you have been all over the place. Was this a planned tour for you to be out representing the Cree Nation?

Grand Chief Coon Come: As Grand Chief, one of my roles is to represent our Cree Nation government. We receive many invitations to participate in meetings ranging from civil society groups, First Nations, conferences and various associations. Most of these requests involve national and international audiences. Usually they ask us to talk about the Cree experience on a wide range of issues from political, social, cultural and socio-economic perspectives. Depending on the topics, many times we suggest to these groups that they send an invitation to one of our Cree entities. The reality is that we receive so many invitations we cannot attend them all.

June was a very busy month. In fact, this past June has been an historic month from the perspective of Aboriginal rights. In a very short span of time during the latter part of June we had the federal government approve the Northern Gateway pipeline project and we also witnessed the hugely important Supreme Court decision in the Williams case dealing with Aboriginal title. I agreed to speak on issues such as governance, Aboriginal rights and resource development. This took me to meeting with the Quebec chiefs in Quebec City, to receiving an invitation from President Obama at Standing Rock Indian Reservation, North Dakota, to addressing the Heilsuk and Haida nations in B.C. and to the Canadian Bar Association in Iqaluit, Nunavut. And lastly, I addressed the Energy Council of Canada in Calgary. I'd say this was quite a week-and-a-half.

Many Native and non-Native organizations want to learn from the Cree experience. Although we are very busy implementing our agreements, negotiating with both levels of government on several fronts, dealing with resources developers and fighting to protect our land and way of life, I believe we should still take the time to share our struggles and successes with our Aboriginal brothers and sisters. In this way, we will all be stronger.

TN: What happened at the Quebec City meeting of chiefs?

GC: The Assembly of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL) meets at least four or five times a year. These meetings

Matthew Coon Come with Charlie Watt

are attended by all of the Chiefs of Quebec along with the participation of the regional women's association, the regional youth group and a representative from the Friendship Centres of Quebec.

I usually attend these meetings to keep abreast of regional and national issues. With so many policies and legislation introduced by both levels of government it is imperative that we Crees participate and contribute to the deliberations, especially where Cree interests may be affected.

This recent meeting dealt with, amongst other matters, the

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To the Graduates of the Teacher Training Program at
the Cree School Board, in collaboration with McGill University.

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We wish them all the Best in their careers in Education!

Graduated on May 30, 2014, (left to right): Nora Katapatuk, with a Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Education, from Waskaganish. Bernadette Katapatuk, with a Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Education from Waskaganish. Josie Cox, with a Bachelor of Education for Certified Teachers, from Chisasibi. Mary Mianscum Dixon, with a Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Education, from Oujebougoumou. Emily Bosum, with a Certificate in First Nations and Inuit Education, from Ouje-Bougoumou.

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resignation of National Chief Atleo and the need to call elections for National Chief. Other issues discussed were related to the Plan Nord and to the Education Act.

At this meeting I took the opportunity to seek the participation of Quebec chiefs in the upcoming BAPE (Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement) hearings and explained the Cree position on uranium projects located in Eeyou Istchee. I impressed upon them that the only way that the risks of uranium mining activities can be properly assessed is through an independent, broad and a rigorous review. I told them that we believe that if this environmental review process is conducted properly and the issues and risks are thoroughly discussed and considered, Quebecers as a whole will join with the Cree Nation and reject uranium development activities in the entire province.

The reaction from the Quebec chiefs was very positive. Several of them expressed similar concerns and agreed to participate in the BAPE hearings. This was certainly a worthwhile meeting to have attended.

TN: What were you doing at the event in North Dakota that U.S. President Obama attended? Did you get the chance to meet him? Was this business or personal?

GC: During my time as Chief, Grand Chief and National Chief I have made many acquaintances among Aboriginal communities and organizations throughout Canada, the US and internationally. As I mentioned earlier, I am often invited to speak and to participate in a wide range of events. This is one of the responsibilities that comes with the office of Grand Chief – to represent the Cree Nation, to share our experiences and to help others where we can. This is also how we learn about some issues that may affect the Cree Nation. This is how this particular event came about. It was strictly business. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to meet President Obama personally.

"I TOLD THEM THAT WE ARE DEMONSTRATING, IN NORTHERN QUEBEC, THAT THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABORIGINAL RIGHTS IS NOT IN CONTRADICTION TO DEVELOPMENT."

TN: You were then on the west coast to address the Heiltsuk and Haida nations, how did that go? Why were you meeting with them? What messages did you share with their youth? Did your presence have anything to do with the opposition of Northern Gateway?

GC: When I met these BC nations, it was immediately obvious that the Northern Gateway pipeline was a major concern because of the impact this project may have on the land, on the environment and on the fisheries. People had serious issues with the possible spill of the tankers and the impact it will have on the fisheries industry. The First Nations in attendance wanted to hear the strategies we undertook to stop the Great Whale project. I gladly shared our experience, the alliances we made, the court cases we launched and the presentations we made at the national and international level.

I shared with them the background to our major agreements – the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement, the Paix des Braves, the Governance Agreement – and how they, together, have translated the recognition of our Aboriginal and treaty rights into tangible benefits for our communities and our people. I shared with them how our successes over nearly 40 years were based on the centrality of our rights in all our struggles and all our negotiations.

I told them that we are demonstrating, in northern Quebec, that the acknowledgement of Aboriginal rights is not in contradiction to development. On the contrary, we believe that to understand and to embrace Aboriginal rights is the necessary condition for the rational and sustainable development of the resources within the territories of Aboriginal peoples, and that this can be done in a spirit of cooperation and harmony.

I mentioned that since the signing of the JBNQA in 1975, the successive leadership of the Cree Nation has been committed to moving our people and our institutions progressively towards a greater expression of nationhood.

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Our recent history over the past 40 years has been all about nation-building. We have been incrementally and progressively putting into place all the necessary tools for our nation, our communities and our people to thrive in health and security. We have been laying the foundations for the long-term sustainability of our young Indigenous nation.

I said that the cumulative effect of the various agreements and initiatives which we have put into place over the course of 40 years have taken us in a direction away from colonialism and toward self-reliance and progressive nation-building.

In light of the recent decision by the federal government to approve the Northern Gateway project, I think my remarks to our BC friends were appreciated and well received.

TN: Not long after this, the Grand Council of the Crees (GCC) put out a joint press release regarding Northern Gateway. What will the GCC be doing to lend its support to this movement?

GC: The GCC, along with a number of Aboriginal organizations and some NGOs, issued a very strong press release condemning the process surrounding the Northern Gateway project. We stated that the project failed to respect the basic human rights of Indigenous peoples whose lands would be affected by the project. The environmental impact assessment of the pipeline project did not consider Indigenous peoples' rights as this issue was excluded from the Joint Review Panel's mandate. The federal government assured the panel that it would consult with the Aboriginal groups on their rights before giving the project final approval. But it failed to do so, and it has called on the project proponent to carry out consultations even though it is the constitutional duty of the Crown to do that. This was very disappointing.

We will be monitoring the situation very carefully, in close cooperation with our brothers and sisters in BC, to see how the federal government exercises its responsibility to consult and accommodate. There will be many eyes now on the government, especially in light of the recent Supreme Court decision in the Williams case which acknowledged Aboriginal title. We will work together with other groups across the country to ensure that the rights of the B.C. Aboriginal people are respected. We need to do this to ensure that our own treaty and Aboriginal rights are never diminished in the future. We are at a potentially historic turning point in the history of Aboriginal peoples of Canada, and we need to be very vigilant and wise to make sure that we all, together, make the most out of this potential.

An invite from Obama

TN: You then went to Nunavut for an event with the Canadian Bar Association. What was this about? Were you a speaker or a participant?

CC: This was an important gathering of lawyers from across the country to focus on a better understanding of Aboriginal rights in the context of resource development. I was invited to be a keynote speaker and I also participated on a panel.

In my keynote address, I described the path the Cree Nation has followed over the past 40 years since we signed the JBNQA, and how this path has taken us from a point in history when the concept of Aboriginal rights had very little meaning, to a situation today where the Cree Nation has forged a nation-to-nation relationship with both the federal and provincial governments. And, we have worked hard during that time to put in place all the necessary building blocks to engage in true Indigenous nation-building.

I gave them a brief history of the Cree Nation since the early 1970s and the circumstances that led to the JBNQA, how we refused to accept the premise that we had no rights, and a brief synopsis of the agreement. I told them about the difficulties we had in getting governments to properly implement the agreement, our opposition to the Great Whale project because it was proposed without our consent and without our involvement, and because of its environmental and social impacts. We maintained the view that our connection with our traditional lands is fundamental to our identity as a people and to our culture. Projects which did not include our participation or

A Resource Mine

Caroline Stockli

St-Bruno-de-Guigues, Nurse Team Leader

"I was promoted to the position of Nurse Team Leader in April, 2012. Currently, my biggest challenges consist of keeping up the pace, monitoring the evolution of the project and mobilizing my team. Every day, I have the opportunity to learn, contribute ideas and hone my skills in occupational health and safety."

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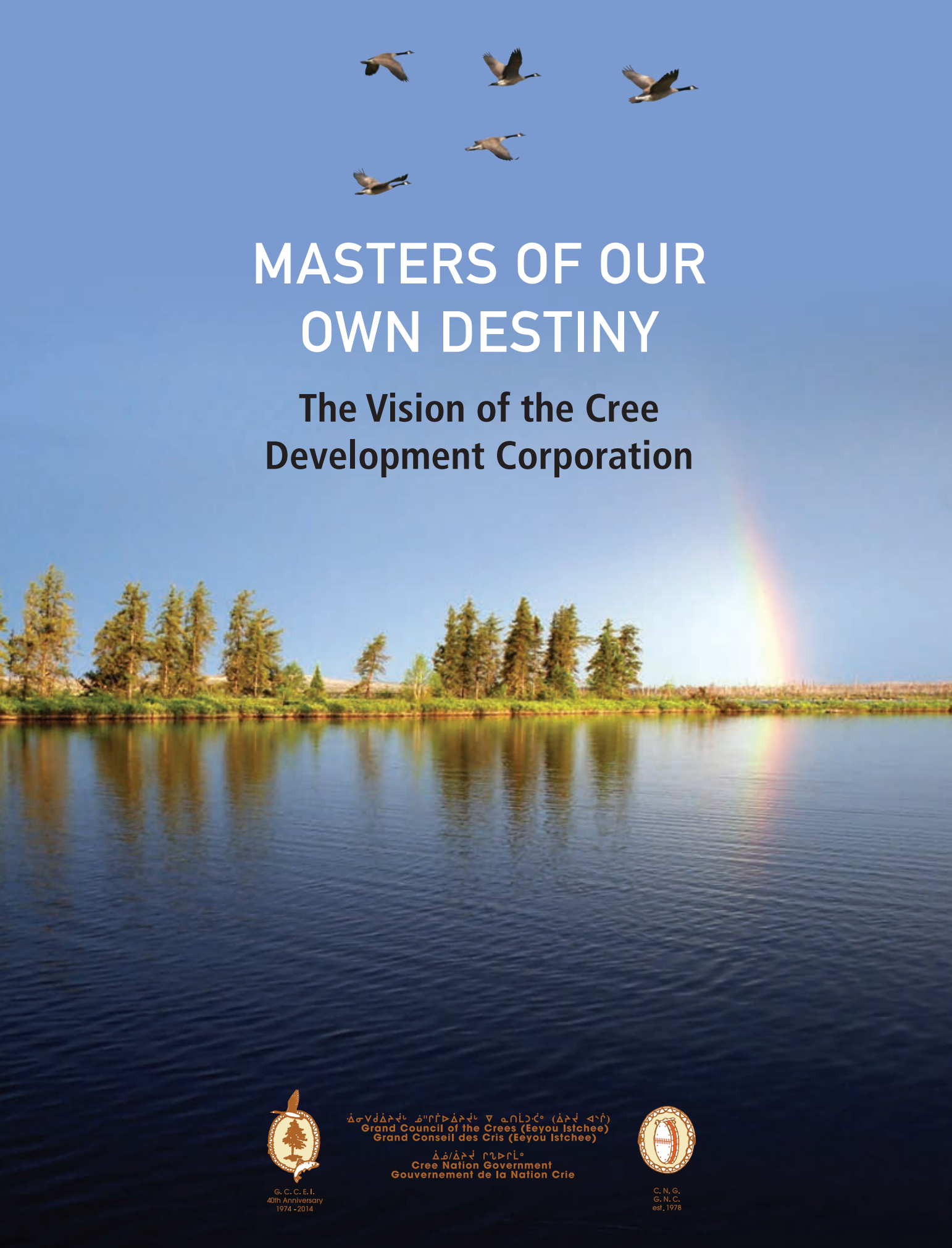

MASTERS OF OUR OWN DESTINY

The Vision of the Cree Development Corporation

G. C. C. E. I.
40th Anniversary
1974 - 2014

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Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee)
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NATION-BUILDING

Since the signing of the *James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement* in 1975, the Cree Nation has been on a contemporary path of Nation-building. We have accomplished much in a short span of time. We have, over the course of nearly forty years, put in place all the major building blocks for a strong indigenous Nation.

The Cree Development Corporation is a key component of this bold vision of the Cree future – a future where we Cree take full control of our economic destiny, a future where the political strength is matched by our economic strength. The Cree Nation has paved the way for building a strong economy.

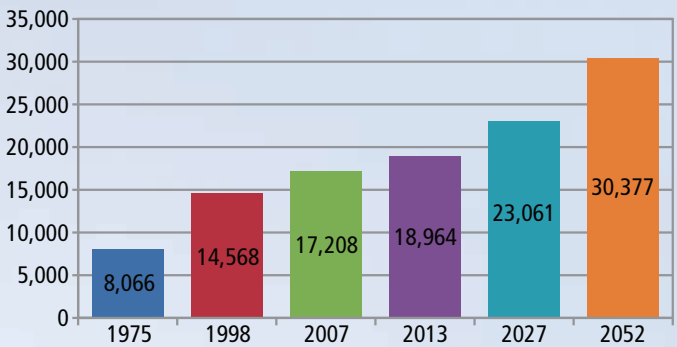
THE VISION

We have before us a future where the Cree Nation is poised is to be a major force in the economic development of Eeyou Istchee and beyond. A future where we have the economic tools to build a vibrant Cree Nation that creates opportunities for our entrepreneurs and especially for our youth. With the Cree Development Corporation, we will be able to build on our achievements to date and build a stronger future.

Our population is growing very fast. Our young people need jobs and opportunities in Eeyou Istchee to raise their families here. They need to see a future for themselves in Eeyou Istchee. One, where their dreams and ambitions can be fulfilled. This is what the Cree Development Corporation is about. It's about building. It's about improving. It's about creating new opportunities for our people.

Historical Cree Population Projected to 2052

Average Yearly Growth 2.32%



At an average yearly growth rate of 2.32% the population could double in the next 30 years.

The *Paix des Braves* created the Wyapschinigun Fund to be the heritage fund for the future of the Crees. In addition to the Wyapschinigun Fund, the *Paix des Braves* created the Cree Development Corporation as the main vehicle for Cree economic development. The Cree Development Corporation will help us move to the next phase of Cree Nation-building. By democratically supporting the *Paix des Braves*, the people gave the mandate to the Cree leadership to create and advance the Cree Development Corporation. The people demonstrated their confidence in our leadership. The people have decided.

THE FUTURE

The Cree Development Corporation will be an active agent of economic development. It will pool many of our Cree financial resources so that we can make strategic investments in key sectors that will create wealth for the Cree Nation as well as job and business opportunities for our people. We need substantial financial resources to make these investments, and the Cree Development Corporation's plan will ensure that these resources are in place to accomplish this.

The Cree Development Corporation will partner with key players in the world of finance and business in Québec and Canada to take full advantage of investment and development opportunities. The Cree Development Corporation is all about increasing Cree participation and Cree control.

The Cree Development Corporation will build on past successes of the Cree entities to create something bigger, stronger and better. It will retain and strengthen CreeCo. The successful companies held by CreeCo will be kept and enhanced – new opportunities will be opened up for them.

This is why the *Paix des Braves* called for the creation of the Cree Development Corporation – to serve as the primary vehicle for Cree regional economic development. And, to ensure the protection of Cree rights, the Cree Development Corporation is part of our Treaty – it falls under Section 28 of the *James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement*.

We live in new and challenging times. New times call for new solutions. The Plan Nord and resource development projects are moving ahead in Eeyou Istchee. They will not wait for the Crees. Either we seize the initiative to shape development in Eeyou Istchee, or we will be left behind. It is time to break camp, and to move on to new opportunities.

The Cree Development Corporation will help us build a brighter future for the Cree Nation.

A message from Cree Development Corporation – Implementation Manager, Rodney W. Hester:

http://new.livestream.com/accounts/8792434/CreeDevelopmentCorporation

"The *Paix des Braves* of 2002 envisaged the Cree Development Corporation as a main vehicle of Cree economic development. The reasons to proceed with the Cree Development Corporation remains as compelling today as they were then. In fact, they are all the more urgent today, in order to seize the business opportunities that are arising now in Eeyou Istchee in the context of the Plan Nord and otherwise. These opportunities may not always be there in the future. Now is the time to strike, with a well-capitalized, Cree-controlled CDC, whose mission it is to develop, pursue and manage these business opportunities, to create jobs and prosperity for the entire Cree Nation."

Grand Chief Dr. Matthew Coon Come

receive our explicit and prior consent would be actively opposed.

I also explained our position on the possible secession of Quebec from Canada in the mid-1990s and what it meant for our traditional territory. The Quebec government of the day believed that, if it seceded from Canada, our traditional lands would remain in Quebec. Once again, we were not consulted, and we mounted a major challenge to Quebec's secession claim. We would not be passed back-and-forth like a piece of furniture between various provincial or federal jurisdictions without our consent.

I explained how, eventually, both Quebec and Canada came to understand, once again, that we were serious about our rights and that we would challenge any initiative that did not respect and acknowledge our rights. I described the circumstances when, in 2002, we signed the historic Paix des Braves with Quebec, and in 2007, when we signed the New Relationship Agreement with Canada. These nation-to-nation agreements enabled us to re-establish and rebuild our relationships with each government on a new footing.

I also told the conference how the Governance Agreement came to be negotiated after Quebec passed legislation giving planning powers over land and natural resources to the Municipality of Baie-James (MBJ), and after announcing the Plan Nord.

I explained how, as a result of our major agreements, we have gradually and incrementally arrived at a point where we are on the brink of becoming the major economic and political force in Eeyou Istchee.

Once again, the participants appreciated the contribution of the Crees to these debates and for advancing the Aboriginal rights agenda.

TN: You then made it to Ottawa for National Aboriginal Day. How did you celebrate there?

GC: National Aboriginal Day is a day of recognizing and celebrating the cultures and the contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis people of Canada.

I celebrated National Aboriginal Day in Ottawa by attending a powwow and enjoying some fried bread.

TN: Is there anything else you would like to say?

GC: Let's talk about the first Supreme Court of Canada decision on Aboriginal Title.

The Supreme Court decision in Tsilhq'ot Nation is particularly important in BC where there are many First Nations communities with unresolved land claims. The decision affirms that the rights of Aboriginal peoples to their lands must be considered by the government and that our rights in the lands must be protected for current and future generations. This decision will have enormous implications for the Northern Gateway project. The decision affirms that the acknowledgment of title gives Aboriginal peoples the right to control development in their territory.

This decision will help groups across Canada assert their rights to have a real say in development projects in their territories and it will give them an opportunity to meaningfully participate in economic development projects if they want to.

This is precisely what we Crees have spent 40 years fighting for. This decision affirms that governments and development companies seeking to use our lands must obtain our consent.

We can take some pride in knowing that the result of our own struggles over the last 40 years have made a contribution to the national discussion on Aboriginal rights, and our history had some influence on the recent Supreme Court ruling. What we have been able to demonstrate is that the acknowledgment of Aboriginal rights, the acceptance of Cree consent, and the respect for the notion of "social acceptability" do not need to be scary propositions. Those things can be done, they can be incorporated into the way in which resource development takes place, and they can result in win-win arrangements for everyone.

"WE SHOULD TAKE THE TIME TO SHARE OUR STRUGGLES AND SUCCESSES WITH OUR ABORIGINAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS. IN THIS WAY, WE WILL ALL BE STRONGER."

Driving from Arenal to Monteverde through the mountains, some of the roads used to be old ox cart roads that became small highways. From right to left: Mikayla Gilpin, Melissa Gilpin, Kylie Simard, Carla Hester, Virginia Wabano, Scott Wabano, Sarah Sarvis, Marcus Moses, Clark Shecapio, Kevin Weistche, Neesha Shecapio

A VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY

Cree youth have the experience of a lifetime in Costa Rica

By Amy German

Seven Waskaganish youth and their four chaperones embarked on a very special trip down to Costa Rica June 21-28 to learn about life abroad and to help out where they could.

The trip, organized by three high-school teachers – Sarah Sarvis, Kylie Simard and Virginia Wabano – brought out graduating and recently graduated students as well as some students from Secondary 4 to experience this beautiful Central American country.

According to Sarvis, the passion for Costa Rica demonstrated by students Neesha Shecapio and Kevin Weistche, who started the community initiative go to the luscious, green paradise, made this destination an easy choice.

Also on the trip were Carla Hester, Marcus Moses, Scott Wabano, Melissa Gilpin, Mikayla Gilpin and Clark Shecapio, who served as an additional chaperone.

While the trip came with a hefty price tag of about $32,000, those taking part in the event spent several months fundraising and the group was able to get a wide variety of local sponsors to contribute about $11,000. The students fundraised the other $20,000 through a raffle that garnered about $6,000 and with food sales, car washes, yard sales, flea markets and other work.

"It was a lot of work for these kids to raise this money, it was almost like having a second job but it was so worth it in the end. All of the students participated with these fundraising events and if they couldn't make it to one, they came to the next. They worked very, very hard to make this money," said Sarvis.

The trip was not all about enjoyment and indulgence however. There was also a desire by the trip organizers to see the kids have the opportunity to do a bit of work, experience the culture and get to know the life of the people there through volunteering.

This was why the group from Waskaganish decided to book their tour through Explorica, a company that specializes in educational travel and student tours, and specifically selected what is called a "make a difference tour" so that the youth could get a well-rounded experience.

Clockwise from top: 1. Clark Shecapio standing next to a traditionally painted ox cart, one of the national symbols of Costa Rica at the Sr y Sra Ese Factory Tour, wood factory in Alajuela. 2. Virginia Wabana with a volunteer firefighter 3. Bins full of scrap pieces which will be recycled for jewellery and other products at the factory. Kevin Weistche, Scott Wabano, Mikayla Gilpin, Melissa Gilpin, Virginia Wabano, Kylie Simard 4. Marcus Moses and Carla Hester at the wood factory, looking at the hanging mobiles

"We would spend half of our days volunteering with families, on farms or with different groups across Costa Rica and spent a lot of time driving to different communities or we would be visiting different tourist places like beaches and volcanoes and things along those lines," said Sarvis.

The Explorica tour guide set up volunteer work and the group went where they were needed. One day they helped a farmer fix his chicken coops. Through this the students were able to get an understanding for this man and his family's farm life.

Other days were spent volunteering at an animal rescue shelter, helping the employees pour cement and clean cages and then helping out at a shelter for the needy.

The entire group before ziplining in the cloud forest at Arenal

The shelter was founded by a Catholic priest in the capital San Jose to care for single mothers and children on the street with a soup kitchen and orphanage. It also offered free daycare for poor working parents.

"They had this huge network of service through this foundation in San Jose and so we did some volunteering to help clean up and look at the kind of services that they provided to the kids in the school age programs so they could learn about that," said Sarvis. "We heard a lot of stories about the children in this shelter, one about how a boy had been adopted and then was returned six months later – this really impacted the kids, and they were very emotional."

The Cree youth also spent a day teaching English to children in a rural school, where they played soccer and other games with the younger children, who were excited about Costa Rica playing in the World Cup that day. They also learned a little Spanish from the older students.

Sarvis said that all of the volunteering experiences addressed specific needs in each community as they travelled through Costa Rica.

"Our goal with this trip was for these kids to experience other cultures and see how other people live, how they treat their environment and how other people are treated so that they could bring that back home," said Sarvis.

The only disappointment was their intention to volunteer with the Indigenous communities of Costa Rica didn't work out because of a communication mix-up with Explorica.

But, this didn't take away from the many glorious experiences. They had all sorts of fabulous adventures that included zip-line tours, hiking up a volcano, a beach trip, kayaking and a hot springs visit. According to Sarvis, the youth seemed to enjoy the zip-line tour the most.

"It was a very extreme experience for these kids as we only had a few with us who had ever travelled to countries other than the United States before going. They all loved how beautiful and green it was and a lot of them enjoyed the beans and rice we ate every day and all of the fresh fruit. We could pick mangoes

Students and teachers at the local school in Arenal, the town was relocated to higher grounds in 1979 because of the hydro dam

off trees on the roadside and just eat them right there. They also loved seeing all the different animals like the moneys, sloths and lizards," said Sarvis.

According to 17-yearold Kevin Weistche, the trip was a "crazy" experience.

"I really liked all of the volunteering work we did in Costa Rica because it really gave me a sense of these communities and what they are about and we were able to make their lives better," Weistche said. "It was really crazy to see the difference between our lives and theirs and to see their housing conditions.

"I will never forget looking into these people's faces because you could see that they didn't need big things to be happy, that it was just the simple things that mattered to them."

Neesha Shecapio said she went on this trip so that she could see another part of the world and that was what she got.

"I really liked kayaking because it was just so peaceful and the scenery was just so beautiful. You could see the mountains and everything was just so green and the water was so calm. We got to go swimming off an island right after, it was beautiful," said Shecapio.

After coming home from this trip Shecapio said she wants to be able to get out and see more of the world, she hopes that Europe is next.

The organizers and students would like to express their appreciation to the following sponsors, who made a dream of a lifetime come true:
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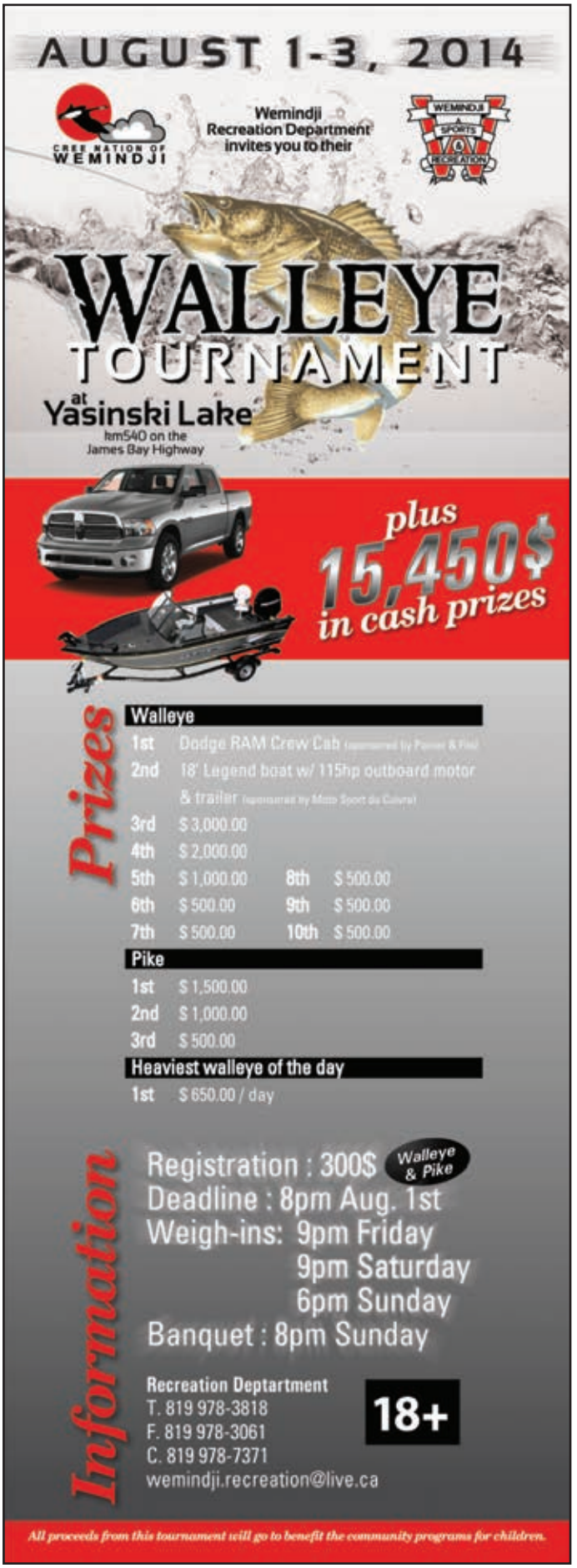
Cree Regional Justice Department (CRA)
Cree Regional Youth Council
Board of Compensation
Waskaganish Elders Council
Ralph Culp and Associates
Air Creebec
Waskaganish Youth Council

from top: 1. Marcus Moses and Kevin Weistche sift the dirt to remove large rocks before adding concrete at the wild life rehabilitation centre
2.. Virginia and Scott Wabano mixing the concrete at the wild life rehabilitation centre
3. Scott Wabano pouring concrete to make a new path at the wild life rehabilitation centre
4. Kevin Weistche and Marcus Moses prepping the sugar cane with a hammer
5. Mikayla Gilpin and Neesha Shecapio crushing the sugar cane to extract the juice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"IT'S LAZY GOVERNMENT; IT'S EASY TO SUE AND SIC THE LAWYERS ON ABORIGINAL GOVERNMENTS, THAT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH FOR A MINISTER TO DO. BUT IT TAKES REAL WORK AND EFFORT TO SIT DOWN AT A TABLE WITH INDIGENOUS NATIONS AND NEGOTIATE TREATY RIGHTS, TITLE, RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION FUNDING, HOUSING OR ANY OF THE MAJOR ISSUES FACING OUR COMMUNITIES."

NDP MP Romeo Saganash

Fighting Aboriginals with public money

Romeo Saganash investigates how much Ottawa spends fighting Aboriginals

By Amy German

After months of thwarted attempts at revealing how much Conservative government spends battling Aboriginal rights and the groups that try to enforce them, NDP MP Romeo Saganash has now turned to the Auditor General of Canada.

On June 12, Saganash sent a letter to Auditor General Michael Ferguson requesting an investigation into the amount of funds the federal government budgets and spends each fiscal year on opposing the status and rights of Aboriginal peoples and defending itself in the courts.

Along with his letter, Saganash included pages of requests that his office had sent to various federal government departments only to be told that the information he was seeking was "not readily available" and therefore would not handed over.

In his letter, Saganash suggests that the government is invoking technical procedures and appeals to delay cases being heard on their merits when fighting these Aboriginal groups with the perhaps intended effect of depleting their financial resources.

The Nation spoke with Saganash to get a better understanding of what he believes is the Conservative government strategy on this issue.

TN: Have you been given any explanation as to why this information is "not readily available"?

RS: When answers are given to Order Paper questions, there are no explanations given for the answers or non-answers supplied. Since each department is responsible to reply to their part of the question, each department that did not provide an answer had its own variation on the "not readily available" response. After consulting with colleagues on what next steps I should take to get an answer, I decided to ask the Auditor General to investigate this matter, in order to get an answer, one that all Canadians deserve to see.

TN: When you mention the opposition Aboriginal groups status and rights and their court defences, what specific incidents are you talking about? Northern Gateway? The victims of St. Anne's Residential School? Elsipogtog First Nation's fracking battle?

RS: I wish I could say that I was only referring to one or two specific cases, but unfortunately this government's approach has been to litigate first, second, and always, appealing to the highest level before being forced to comply.

In his report on his visit to Canada last fall, former UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya specifically pointed to Canada's adversarial approach to Aboriginal and treaty rights, and also pointed out this government "typically seeks the most restrictive interpretation of Aboriginal and treaty rights possible." When that is the chosen approach of

MOCREEBEC COUNCIL OF THE CREE NATION

In reviewing the MoCreebec Constitutional Framework recently I came to a firm realization of certain things.

First, the 51 founding members that ratified the Constitution on June 6, 1993 had actually declared themselves that day to be a community. The official press release announcement that came out from late Chief Randy Kapashesit's office states;

> *"…This is an important day for all of us. We have said formally and publicly, that we are a community and we want to work together to build something for our children….It is the logical evolution of the work we began when we started building houses for our members. Now we are ready to start building the structures we will need to govern ourselves in the future…."*

The 51 persons who signed and ratified the Constitution that historic day (and the many more who have signed on since), are the founding members of the newly constituted MoCreebec community.

Acting Chief
ALLAN JOLLY

Secondly, the ratified Constitution is a declaration and statement by the MoCreebec community/members choosing their own path of self-determination and self-governance. The members have chosen to empower their own governing system, based on the principles of equality, independence and self-reliance, drawing strength from the community's natural core – the family.

The MoCreebec Constitutional Framework is about opening opportunities for the community, not cutting them off. The relationships and benefits under the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement are not ignored, but neither is the conviction of members to prosper and grow in the place they call home (excerpt of MoCreebec Constitution).

MoCreebec leadership has now begun a process in which it is calling upon all levels of aboriginal and non-aboriginal governments in Quebec, Ontario and Canada to forums of dialogue and negotiations as we move ahead to put substance, clarity and recognition of a MoCreebec community and a model of self-governance.

MoCreebec has come a long way since the association was established back in 1980. MoCreebec offers a variety of programs and services designed to serve the MoCreebec community, in areas such as health, housing, employment, education, and communication.

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Former UN Special Rapporteur James Anaya

'FORMER UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR JAMES ANAYA, IN HIS REPORT ON HIS VISIT TO CANADA LAST FALL, SPECIFICALLY POINTED TO CANADA'S ADVERSARIAL APPROACH TO ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHTS, AND ALSO POINTED OUT THIS GOVERNMENT "TYPICALLY SEEKS THE MOST RESTRICTIVE INTERPRETATION OF ABORIGINAL AND TREATY RIGHTS POSSIBLE."'

this government, you sadly end up with too many examples to point to.

TN: Are you trying to see what was spent on all of the above?

RS: I am trying to see what the Government of Canada is spending overall, in all cases, on fighting Aboriginal rights, status, title and treaty rights in Canadian courts.

TN: Can you give me some other examples of the government invoking technical procedures and appeals to delay cases being heard on their merits?

RS: Again, the government has typically appealed cases that they have lost, which are the majority of cases, and continued to appeal right to the very end. The rationale they give is that they must appeal to protect the best interests of all Canadians. But given their losing record in these cases, I submit that it would be in the best interest of all Canadians to negotiate and settle these cases, rather than litigate.

A good example of this was the Nuu-Chah-Nulth fishing rights case, which took more than 10 years to work through the courts, with appeal after appeal by the federal government. In the end, think of all the money they spent fighting just that one case, money that could have gone towards implementing the solution the court will now ensure they will have to.

By deciding to take a more conciliatory approach, the government could use all that money being paid to lawyers to fight the inevitable losses they end up with to actually address and solve the problems our communities face.

TN: While it may seem like an obvious question, please explain what the Conservatives have to gain by undermining First Nations peoples?

RS: I believe that a big part of it is that they think it is easier to ignore and fight in courts than it is to negotiate and actually tackle the problems head-on. It's lazy government; it's easy to sue and sic the lawyers on Aboriginal governments, that doesn't take much for a minister to do.

But it takes real work and effort to sit down at a table with Indigenous nations and negotiate treaty rights, title, resource development, education funding, housing or any of the major issues facing our communities. That is even harder when you've spent years claiming these problems don't exist, like the Conservatives did for years regarding the underfunding of First Nations schools. In the end, the Conservatives want to have their cake and eat it too. They are not willing to do the hard work to negotiate with Aboriginal governments and are trying to find the easy way out.

TN: What does this say about the nature of the Conservative government?

RS: When you sit across from members of this Conservative government on a daily basis, you get a good insight into how they view the world. From that experience, part of how they approach these matters is really no different than how they approach others who do not agree with them, whether it be people in the environmental movement, veterans fighting to protect their benefits or seniors speaking up to protect their mail service.

But another part of it is that the majority of their caucus members don't believe in the very concepts of Aboriginal rights and title and treaty rights. Don't forget, there are members of this government who were Reform Party members who filibustered and tried to kill the Nisga'a treaty and opposed Aboriginal fishing rights in the late 1990s. So I think that denial of the concept of Aboriginal rights is also part of the equation.

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Thursday, June 19, 2014

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Ground breaking

Construction begins on new Mistissini youth centre

by Amy German

Earth has finally been turned across the street from the Mistissini band office for a new youth centre.

Representatives from the Mistissini band council, including Chief Richard Shecapio and Director of Municipal Services Emmett Macleod and members of the Mistissini Youth Council joined about 100 band members June 20 for a ground breaking ceremony and BBQ lunch.

"The need is great for a new facility for the youth population because the majority of our population is so young," said Shecapio.

Shecapio said that council made a particular effort to ensure that the new building would finally be realized after years of work by previous Mistissini administrations.

He shared ceremonial shovel duties with Mistissini Youth Chief Shawn Iserhoff for the traditional photo-op.

The new building is slated to open its doors in early 2015. The new facility will be significantly larger than the previous youth centre, which has been closed for years after being condemned as unsafe.

"We have tried to make sure that it is not just a plain building. It will be a nice facility for sure. We are going to use the same kind of materials that we used on the sports complex like wood beams mixed with steel. Size wise we are looking at something that will be more than twice the size of the current youth centre," said Shecapio.

According to Iserhoff, the centre will be a place for youth to engage in everything from sports to learning to socializing.

"The youth wanted somewhere to hang out and mingle with other youth and not have to be outdoors in the cold during the winter months. We wanted to have a full-size gymnasium because the community is getting bigger and at the sports complex priority really wasn't being given to the youth. We were able to get a multi-purpose hall, which is like a half-size gymnasium where they will be able to shoot hoops or have mini floor-hockey tournaments and things like that," Iserhoff said.

This multi-purpose room offers space for workshops and can accommodate up to 50 people. It could also be used as a movie theatre. The youth would also be able to rent this room out to other groups during the day while they are busy at school

The building will also feature a conference room that can be transformed into a computer hub or a training room.

Along with office space, the new facility will have an unfinished basement which could be used as a music studio should the funding be found for it.

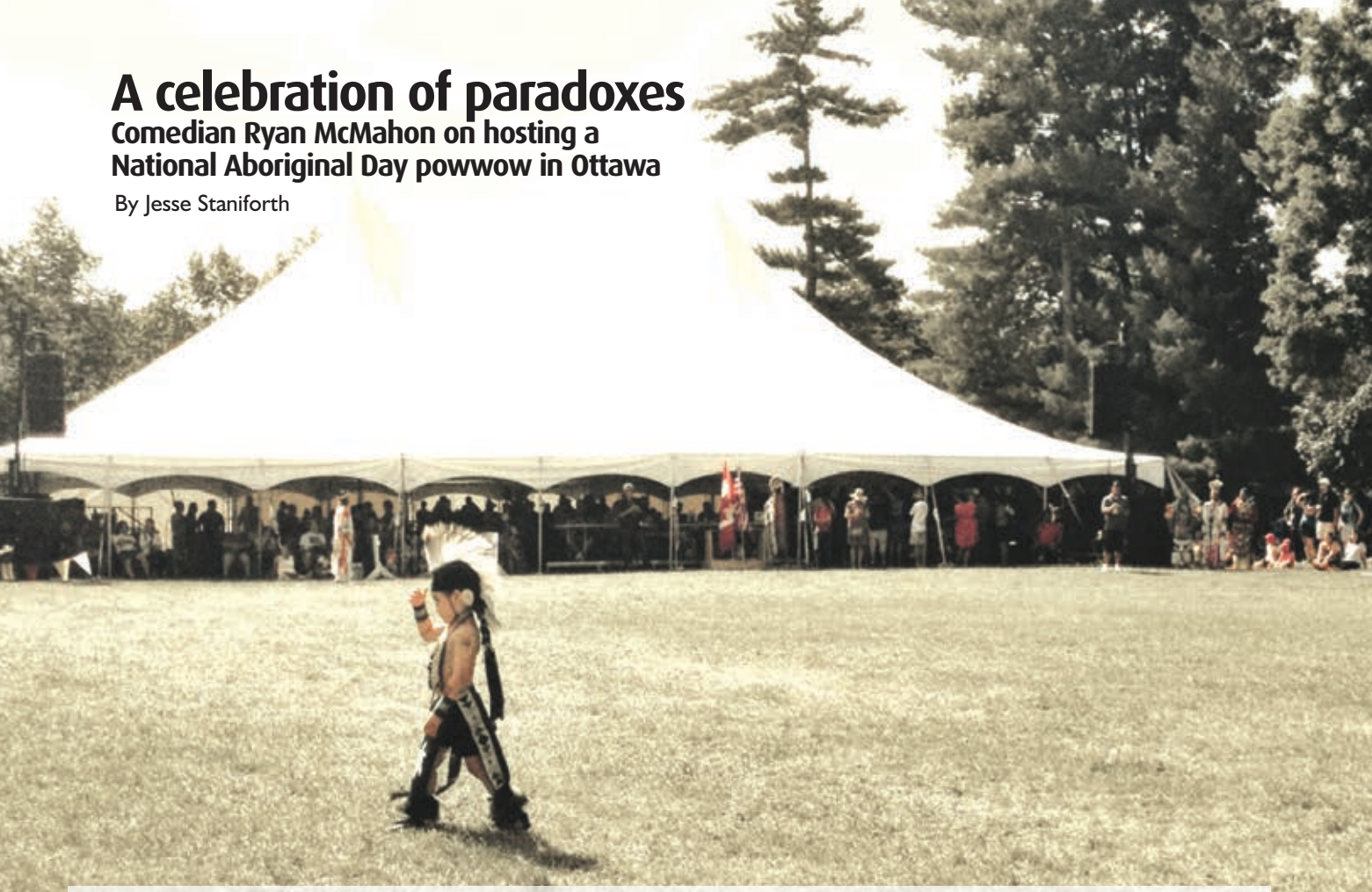
"They are going to be making the walls sound proof and work on the acoustics and so there is going to be potential for that in the future," said Iserhoff.

Since the closure of the previous youth centre, the community's young had been trying to create events and after-school programming at Mistissini's sports complex. But they had to compete with other groups throughout the community and priority wasn't always given to the youth. That's about to change.

A celebration of paradoxes

Comedian Ryan McMahon on hosting a National Aboriginal Day powwow in Ottawa

By Jesse Staniforth



Louise came to the powwow from Manitoulin, but she said she didn't want to talk to the Nation on record about her feelings about Ottawa's third annual Summer Solstice Aboriginal Arts Festival (SSAAF). She had her reasons. Finally she said, "If there's one thing you can quote me on, it's that powwow means different things to everyone. For some people it's a festival and a good time, it's a chance to see the dancers and hear the music. But for other people and families it can mean much more personal things."

The emcee of this powwow for the second year in a row, Anishinabe comedian Ryan McMahon, agreed with Louise's observation. "To families, powwow means something different, depending on where you come from, and your own family's experience with it," he explained. "Some people have more experience than others. It's generational, and it does mean something a little bit different to everybody."

McMahon pointed to the difference between families who travel the powwow circuit every weekend, those just now discovering their connection to powwow culture, and those for whom the connection already exists but who don't have enough money to maintain it.

"There are families that are excluded from the circle," he added. "Powwow is a privilege, and for those who are privileged enough to be able to afford to drive hundreds of kilometres every weekend, that can afford to stay in hotels and eat in restaurants, it can be a place of privilege as well. We should always acknowledge that."

McMahon's wasn't raised with the powwow as a central part of his culture. "My family dabbled, but residential school had a real firm grip on our family."

Still, he contended, powwow culture has an amazing pull even on those who never experience it.

"You're drawn to it," he said. "It's a calling. Whether you're Native or non-Native. One of the things that's so remarkable, in the types of things we hear from the powwow, are things like 'I started to cry when I heard that drum, and I'm a white guy! What was I feeling?' Or, 'I'm a non-Native women visiting from Scotland, and we heard the drums and came running!' You hear these things all the time. It really does come down to the base principle of being human and being attracted to basic things. Cultural gatherings that are inclusive and open the door to everybody are wonderful things."

It's the central drum of powwow that draws people together, McMahon contended, noting that every nation on earth has music based in drums and percussion instruments.

"They're used differently," he said, "some socially, some spiritually. But that drum and that heartbeat that we hear at the powwow is something that every one of us carries. So the beauty of that heartbeat is that it calls you into it."

The Host Drum at this year's SSAAF was the legendary Northern Cree Singers – a Juno-award-winning group that has been a fixture of the powwow circuit for over 30 years. However, the other groups competing in the drum competition were equally electrifying, especially the

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- Ensure the maintenance of cellular phones, printers and other network equipment;
- Ensure the up-date, the preparation, the configuration and installation of work stations;
- Prepare user guidelines for software and applications and offer training for users;
- Provide user support to reach the objective of « Paperless Meetings »;
- Prepare technical specification sheets of the meetings for the hosting towns and communities of meetings and ensures compliance to technological needs for the meetings;
- Provide support in the development and update of the web site.

REQUIREMENTS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- College diploma in Computer Science;
- Three (3) to five (5) years of experience in a similar position;
- Sound knowledge in content management systems, network systems, local and wide area networks, Microsoft Office Suite, IP telephone systems, management and update of web sites, « Paperless Council meetings » software;
- Ability to easily adapt to new technologies;
- Demonstrate tact, diplomacy and discretion;
- Good organizational skills, reliable and punctual;
- Ability to analyze and solve problems;
- Ability to work in remote locations and in a multicultural environment;
- Bilingualism is essential (French and English).

year's winner the Black Bear Singers, an Atikamekw group from Manawan, Quebec.

The SSAAF, however, offered a great deal more than its competition powwow. Among other attractions, there was a main stage of performers, a cultural tent offering examples of the traditions and practices of the host Algonquin Nation, and a workshop tent in which the Northern Cree Singers taught an hour-long introduction to Big Plains Traditional drumming.

But most came for the powwow, which McMahon hosted with a command and energy surprisingly at odds with the laid-back, self-mocking persona he has made famous with his comedy.

"You are performing, as an MC," he explained. "You're trying to bring people forward, and you're a teacher, and you're entertaining people. You're trying to bring the spirit of the powwow and the inclusiveness of it out. You gotta be firm: there's times when it gets a little more serious, and there are times when you could be a little more light-hearted."

While he's widely known for his comedy, and for his popular podcasts Red Man Laughing and Life According to Clarence Two-Toes, McMahon has been quietly honing his talent as a powwow MC for well over a decade.

"Slowly I've just been adding dates here and there and getting more and more experience," he said. "There's a lot to learn. It's a lifetime commitment and it's something you really have to prepare for and you're not to take lightly. Also, there aren't a lot of MCs out there. They are always looking for new blood, but it's not for everybody. It's an honour, but it's also a big challenge."

One aspect of Ottawa's Summer Solstice powwow is that it coincides with National Aboriginal Day. This

year it took place in the wake of Shawn A-In-Chut Atleo's resignation as National Chief of the AFN over the Conservative government's First Nations Education Act – and four days after the federal government approved Enbridge Inc.'s Northern Gateway pipeline.

For all of these reasons, "Aboriginal" is a word McMahon said he uses carefully.

"I joke in the new hour of comedy I'm writing that I'd rather you called me a 'drunk Indian' than an 'Aboriginal person.' Because at least I know you're racist, and I know exactly where we stand. When you're calling me 'Aboriginal' and it's done with a smile – that's the polite and political way to say it – then it becomes a grey area where we've kind of made it easy for Canadians to forget, or to not learn or to not know, that they're on Indigenous territories. That [people's] traditional lands are under their feet."

McMahon noted that the event itself is paradoxical: a celebration of Indigenous nations presented by the colonial nation that now exerts top-down control over all the peoples it colonized.

"If you go from coast to coast to coast, many National Aboriginal Day [events] are paid for by the perpetrators – industry and government often get the right to pass because they're funding these things. Is it problematic? Absolutely. But we gather on the solstice anyway."

And the SSAAF was nothing if not a celebration. Though it had fewer dancers competing than older and more-established powwows, the crowd was supportive and the drummers sang their hearts out. The crowd was notably cross-cultural: a nearby community picnic attracted many women in hijabs and people of African descent, who watched dancers shoulder to shoulder with people of European and Asian ancestry, not to mention people from many different First Nations, near and far.

"I think at the heart of it, the purity and the beauty of it is that it's about community," said McMahon. "It's about sitting together, sharing food, sharing social time, teachings, songs and our cultural items. Really keeping the sense of what it means to be a community-minded people. That's what's at the heart of powwow. So if it's a context powwow and there's money or prizes on the line, at the heart of it, still, there's brotherhood, sisterhood and community."

Explosions in the sky

by Xavier Kataquapit

Explosions in the sky have always fascinated humankind.

My Elders passed down a legend to me about lightning – Oh-mee-nee-s-koh – as originating from the west. We Cree on the James Bay coast live on flat tundra and mushkeg. We consider any rise in the land as a mountain. The stories that were passed down about Oh-mee-nee-s-koh described it as a living being who lived in a world onto its own in the sky. He or she wandered the sky and passed over our heads from time to time in the clouds that formed in the storms during the summer.

This being also originated from the high mountains of the west. These lands were described as being so high that Oh-mee-nee-s-koh could step off from the mountaintops and onto the clouds.

This year, my July 1st was full of explosions in the sky. My friends John and Colleen invited me to watch a fireworks display in Alymer, Ontario. The evening was festive with live music and all kinds of entertainment mainly for children. It was hot and sultry as we sat on the top of a large hill overlooking the fireworks launch pad. It was magical to watch the sun disappear in hues of red and purple over the surrounding lush forests and farmland.

When darkness fell and the stars popped into the sky to join a crescent moon, we knew the fireworks would soon begin. Suddenly, there was a loud burst and great flowers of flame shot up into the sky. These flowers and brilliant balls of light dazzled the audience with an entire spectrum of colours. The explosive sounds were almost deafening and echoed or ricocheted off the town behind us. The darkened sky lit up constantly with dramatic brush strokes of light that streaked and screamed across the night sky. There were "oohs" and "aahs" from the crowd with every blast of fireworks into the heavens. It all climaxed in a crescendo of brilliant, colourful rockets that turned the dark sky into a kaleidoscope of shapes.

As I drove along in the dark on my way home, I noticed a huge storm front brewing. The lightning pulsated from one side of the horizon to the other and lit up the powerful anvil-shaped clouds in the distant sky.

As I drove on, it occurred to me that Oh-mee-nee-s-koh had come to visit me in the south and was running wildly on the tops of the clouds. It helped me remember all of those Elders that had talked about the power of lightning and fire. Decades ago when my people were very close to the land a huge thunderstorm, presided over by Oh-mee-nee-s-koh, often meant a refreshing break from the black flies and mosquitoes. It also brought rain to replenish the forests and tempered the heat of a summer day.

The explosions from the storm and the man-made fireworks of my July 1st also reminded me of humankind's fascination with big fire. As part of our evolution, I think we have gone down a bad track in developing weapons of mass destruction having to do with explosions in the sky.

I am reminded of that fascinating book by Farley Mowat called And No Birds Sang, in which he wrote about his time in World War II living with daily bombings and explosions that tore his friends apart. It reminded me of the atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during that same war. The destruction that our fascination with big fire produces has developed to the point where our very existence on this planet is threatened.

It bothers me greatly that we have lost our respect for Oh-mee-nee-s-koh. We have enough nuclear weapons on this planet to destroy it many times over and we have allowed ourselves to be governed by leaders who constantly wage war. Perhaps we should remind them that our existence here is fragile enough without the real danger of nuclear conflict. These fireworks would be fatal.

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